

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 03945 131319Z

50

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

RSR-01 CU-04 HEW-08 OMB-01 EB-11 TRSE-00 /116 W

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R 131230Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8097

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS UNN

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USNMR SHAPE

USCINCEUR

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, BE

SUBJECT: INTERNAL POLITICS - GOVERNMENT'S FUTURE UNCERTAIN

REF: BRUSSELS 3588, 3481, AND 3397

1. PRIME MINISTER LEBURTON HAS LED HIS SEEMINGLY FRAGILE COALITION OF SOCIALISTS, SOCIAL CHRISTIANS AND LIBERALS THROUGH THE PARLIAMENTARY SESSION AND ACCOMPLISHED ALL THE ESSENTIAL INTERIM TASKS SET FOR HIS GOVERNMENT LAST JANUARY. BUDGETS WERE ADOPTED, THE CULTURAL PACT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF 1970 CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS FOR CULTURAL AUTONOMY WAS ENACTED INTO LAW, AND SCHOOL LEGISLATION WAS REVISED AS AGREED IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 BRUSSE 03945 131319Z

GOVERNMENT PROGRAM SO THAT ALMOST ALL PAROCHIAL SCHOOL COSTS WILL

NOW BE BORNE BY THE STATE. IN DOING THIS, LEBURTON AGAIN DISPLAYED THE POLITICAL SKILLS THAT HAD CARRIED HIM INTO OFFICE (AND CONFOUNDED POLITICAL SAVANTS); HOWEVER, IN TERMS OF THE SUBSTANCE OF ISSUES CONSIDERED, HE AND THE SOCIALIST PARTY GAVE MORE THAN THEY RECEIVED.

2. PARLIAMENT WOULD UP WITH SOMEWHAT MORE THAN ITS USUAL END-OF-SESSION HISTRIONICS BUT ONLY SLIGHTLY BEHIND SCHEDULE. THE CHAMBER FINISHED ITS WORK IN A MARATHON SESSION JUNE 29-30 AND PROMPTLY ADJOURNED; THE SENATE FRETTE THROUGH THE FIRST WEEK OF JULY. ONLY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSION ON REGIONALIZATION REMAINS AT WORK, LABORING ON A LENGTHY REPORT OF ITS EFFORTS THAT MAY NOT BE READY ON JULY 15 AS SCHEDULED BUT IS OF LITTLE IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCE SINCE, COMMISSION MEMBERS ASSURE US, IT WILL OFFER NO AGREED RECOMMENDATIONS ON KEY ISSUES. THESE ISSUES ARE BEING CONSIDERED BY THE GOVERNMENT UNDER THE DIRECTION OF VICE PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS, WHO HAS PROMISED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSAL WILL BE READY FOR PARLIAMENT IN OCTOBER.

3. OPINION OF MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND OTHER POLITICAL LEADERS IS DIVIDED OVER THE GOVERNMENT'S LONG-TERM PROSPECTS. PRIME MINISTER LEBURTON WILL CERTAINLY HAVE TO CONCEDE A GREAT DEAL OF THE "MINIMALIST" SOCIALIST POSITION ON REGIONALIZATION TO SATISFY FLEMISH SOCIAL CHRISTIAN DEMANDS. HIS MAIN PROBLEM MAY THEREFORE BE SUPPORT FROM HIS OWN PARTY, AS WAS THE CASE WITH THE CULTURAL AND SCHOOL BILLS. DELEGATES TO THE SOCIALIST CONGRESS IN JANUARY GAVE THE NEW GOVERNMENT ONLY A 57 PERCENT VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, THE LOWEST OF ANY OF THE GOVERNMENT PARTIES, AND THE EXTENT OF LEBURTON'S POLITICAL SUPPORT AMONG HIS SOCIALIST COLLEAGUES IS UNCERTAIN. EVEN LEBURTON'S CLOSEST ADVISERS ARE UNWILLING TO PREDICT THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL SURVIVE THE EVENTUAL CRUNCH OVER REGIONALIZATION OR, AS HIS CHEF DE CABINET SPITAEELS NOTED TO US, OVER THE INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT BUDGETARY PROBLEMS THAT REGIONALIZATION MAY WORSEN. OTHER OBSERVERS, AS NOTED IN REFTELS, ARE EQUALLY CONVINCED THAT DISMAL ELECTION PROSPECTS FOR THE COALITION PARTIES MILITATE STRONGLY FOR ACCOMMODATION ON REGIONALIZATION AND OTHER ISSUES, AND THAT THE LEBURTON GOVERNMENT WILL GO FULL TERM UNTIL THE FALL, 1975.

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PAGE 03 BRUSSE 03945 131319Z

STRAUSZ-HUPE

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